

# MASSACHUSETTS PAROLE BOARD: SPECIAL REPORT

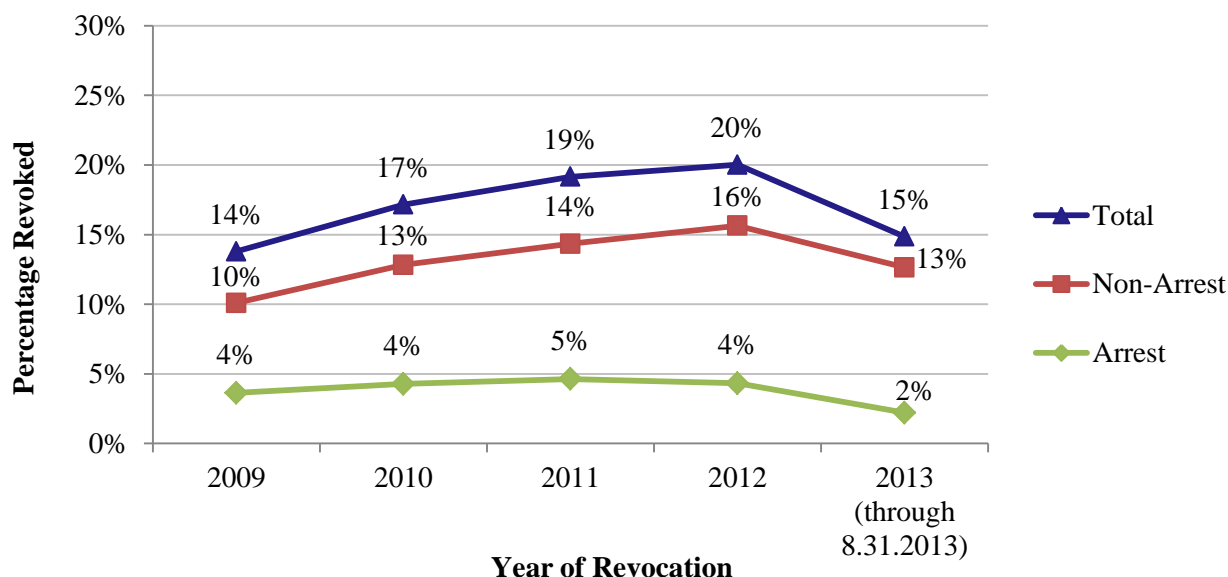


## *Trends in Revocation among Massachusetts Parolees*

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The following analysis examines parole revocations as a proportion of the annual Massachusetts Parole Board caseload. The annual parole population, which serves as a base rate for the percentage of parolees revoked, is a sum of the standing parole population at the start of each year and the annual number of parole releases to one of the eight regional field offices. This sample does not include paroles to out of state custody, out of state supervision, from and after sentences, other warrants, or Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody. Resulting annual percentages of the parole population revoked (i.e., total) are disaggregated by revocations from new arrests (i.e., arrest) and revocations from violations of parole conditions, without arrest (i.e., non-arrest).

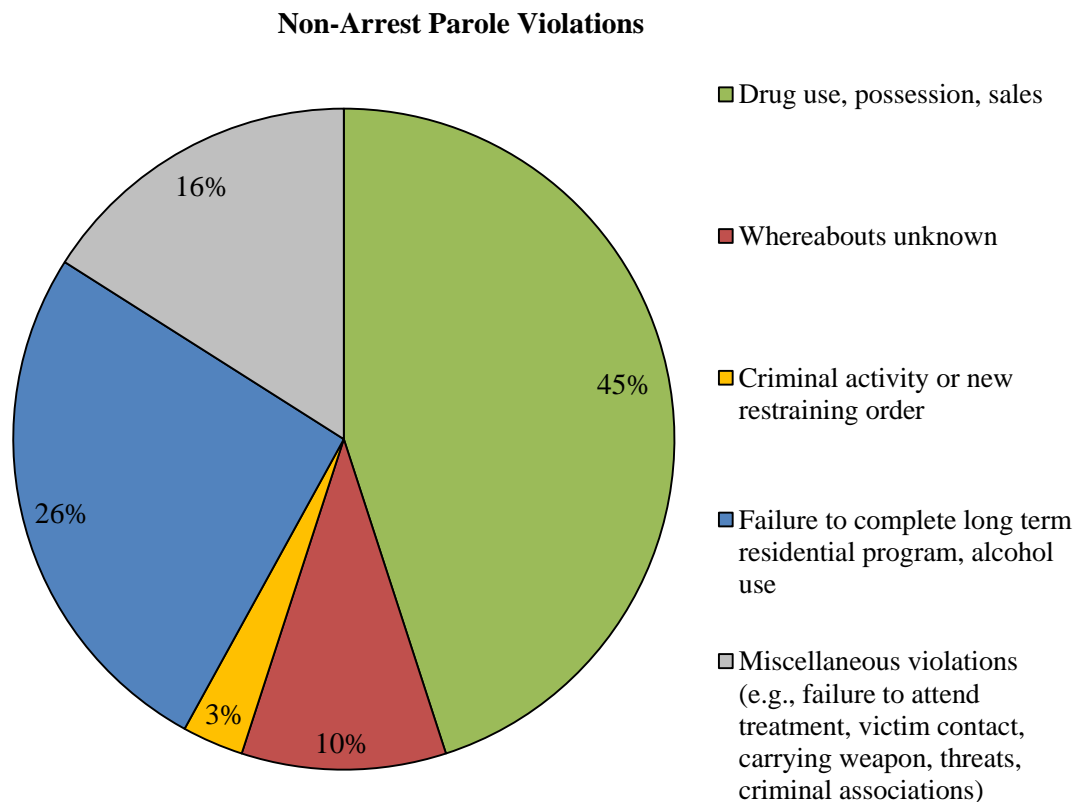
**Percentage of Parole Population Revoked**



Revocations that result from a new arrest are typically initiated by law enforcement, and not the parolee's field parole officer. For example, a parolee who is arrested for assault and battery, drug trafficking, or breaking and entering may be revoked in addition to incurring new criminal charges. Revocations that are not based on a new arrest are typically initiated by the parole officer. There are various conditions of parole, upon violation of such conditions the parolee may be returned to custody and revoked. To provide examples of the types of non-arrest parole violations, a case study analysis was conducted. The sample consisted of 100

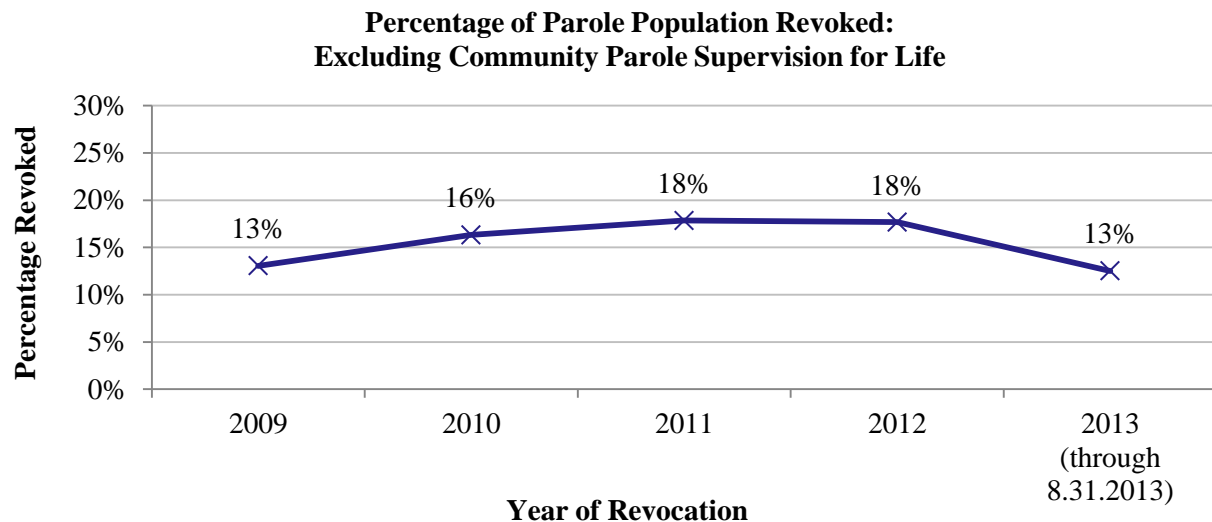
randomly selected parole violators in 2013. Each case was evaluated in order to determine a reason for violation. In the majority of cases, parolees are violated for a combination of reasons. However, for the purposes of this analysis only one reason was selected for coding.

The following chart indicates a percentage of the sample (n=100) for which each type of violation occurred. Drug use, possession, and sales were the most common reasons for parole violation (45%). Although these acts usually involve a violation of the drug laws, the Parole Board typically uses a series of sanctions, including revocation, as an alternative to criminal investigation.



Over the past decade, the parolee population of offenders with a sentence of community parole supervision for life (M.G.L. c. 265, § 45) has been growing. This particular population of sex offenders is subject to non-discretionary parole supervision. Typically, Parole Board Members use their discretion in determining whether eligible inmates meet the legal standard for parole, and are granted supervision as such. Community parole supervision for life, however, results from a judicial sentence (which is often mandatory). The Board does not place people on community parole supervision for life. Due to this difference in discretionary and non-discretionary parole, it is possible that the number of revocations for the two populations is different. For purposes of calculating a percentage of the parole population that has been

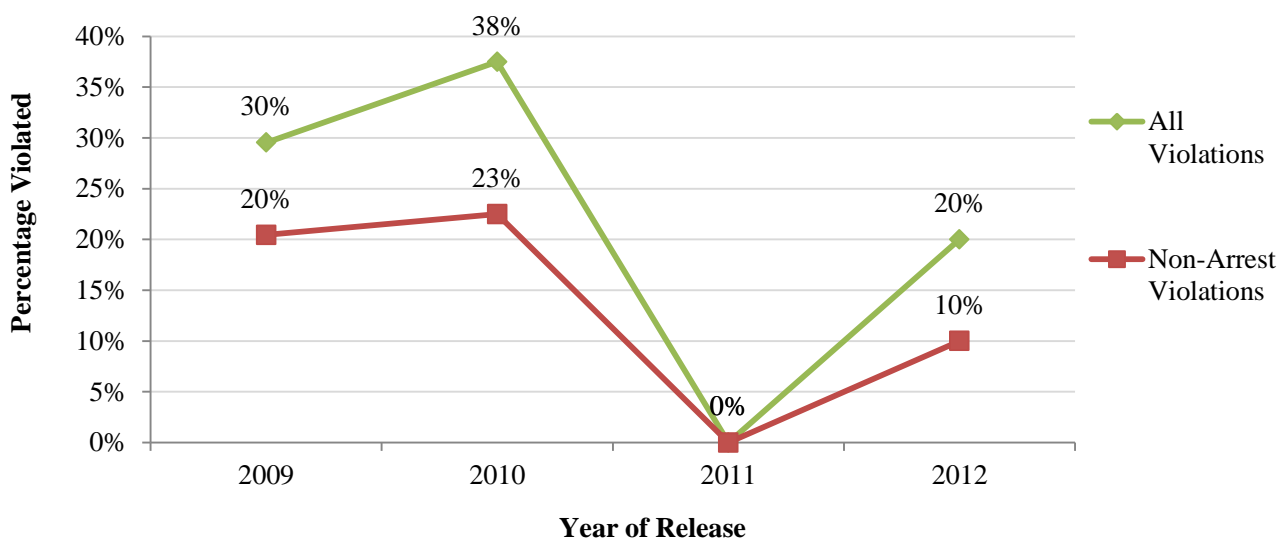
revoked, individuals mandated to community parole supervision for life, and corresponding revocations for this population, were removed from the sample, with the following results.



After examining all parolees who were discretionarily released to parole supervision in Massachusetts, it can be determined that the largest change in the prevalence of revocation over a five-year period was five percentage points. Notwithstanding notable agency change and the appointment of several new Board Members over the same time frame, the percentage of revocations each year remains relatively stable.

Finally, inmates who are sentenced to serve life in prison with the possibility of parole and have been subsequently released onto parole are surveyed as a special cohort of releases. In order to obtain a consistent point of comparison, releases from life sentences each year are compiled to create annual cohorts. A one-year follow-up from the date of release was used to determine whether a violation of parole occurred. Releases for 2012 are included up to September, as a one year follow-up period was not available for October through December releases. Parole Violation Reports were used, instead of revocation, for this analysis. Because revocations take a longer amount of time to complete, a one year follow-up period is not adequate to measure revocation. However, violations are completed upon acknowledgement the behavior that is in violation of parole conditions. Therefore, one-year follow-up data for parole violations serves as a more sensitive point of comparison between annual releases. The following chart displays violations as a percentage of life sentence releases between 2009 and 2012. All violations and violations of parole conditions alone (i.e., those not involving a new arrest) are compared.

**Percentage of Life Sentence Parole Population with Parole Violations:  
One Year Follow-Up from Release**



The percentage of parolees with a life sentence who violated parole was greatest among 2010 releases, where 38% of this cohort violated parole within one year of release. Parole releases in 2011 held the lowest number of violations, where no life sentence parolees released in 2011 received a Parole Violation Report (0%) within one year. The data indicate that life sentence inmates who met the legal standard for parole release in 2011 were less likely to violate parole, than those in past years. A similar decline in revocations did not occur for the general parole population in 2011 or 2012, as evidenced previously. Therefore, such change in violation patterns among this specific population of parolees is distinct in comparison to agency trends.

Through combining the evaluations presented in this report, it is clear that the Massachusetts Parole Board's revocation practices over the course of nearly five years have remained stable. Furthermore, when parolees are revoked for violations of parole conditions, the acts that warrant such violation tend to be serious in nature (e.g., criminal behavior, absconding from supervision). Although parole revocation after arrest is not susceptible to agency change, it is plausible that revocation for violations of parole conditions could change over time. However, it appears that total revocation rates for the general parole population are the same in 2013 as they were in 2009.